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THE AUTHOR OF THE YIGDAL HYMN

Professor A. Marx's 'List of the poems on the Articles of the Creed' in this REVIEW (vol. IX, p. 305 sqq.) is a product of comprehensive and careful research. It certainly deals with a fascinating subject, and shows, among other things, the enormous influence which Maimonides' articles exercised even on the poetic genius of mediaeval Jews. I am much gratified at having indirectly stimulated him to take up the question of the authorship of the *Yigdal*. Marx objects to my suggestion that the author of the hymn is not Daniel b. Judah Dayyan, but Immanuel of Rome. His contention rests solely on Luzatto's oft quoted remark in his Introduction to the Maḥzor of the Roman rite. To style this a 'positive proof' is surely carrying the *ipse dixit* too far, for if we abided by dicta such as this, there would be an end to all progressive research. The whole question hinges on the explanation of the word שִׁסְבְּרָם which Marx takes in the sense of 'he composed'. Now the verbal root סִבֵּר does not occur in biblical Hebrew at all, whilst the two nominal forms סִבְרִים (Job 10. 22) and מִסְבְּרוֹן (Judg. 3. 23) bear the meaning 'order' and 'arrangement of pillars'. Wherever we find verbal forms of this root in post-biblical literature, they are *denominativa* of סִבֵּר. In the Targums the verb is used for Hebrew עָרַךְ, as likewise in the Mishnāh, e. g. סִבֵּר אֶת הַלָּחֶם (*Men.* 11. 8). It is hardly necessary to quote any of the numerous passages in which both the nominal and verbal forms occur in the Talmud. In all these passages the meaning is 'to arrange', but nowhere 'to compose'; for if this were so one might assume that Simeon Happeküli was the author of the Eighteen Benedictions (Ber. 28 vo.). There is really no need to multiply quotations from rabbinic writings, but we should suppose that the writer of the notice in question was sufficiently acquainted with the meaning of סִבֵּר, and not charge him with

a loose application of the term. The note in Cod. Brit. Mus. to which Professor Marx ascribes so much importance is only a mechanical copy of the other, being written by a professional copyist devoid of any argumentative power.

Professor Marx disagrees with my suggestion that in the words **לַעֲמוֹ אֵל** one may find an allusion to the author's name. In my opinion it would be surprising if a poet of Immanuel's skill had not been able to introduce his full name in the usual way of an acrostic or by similar means. Now here Marx overlooked a point which is even more serious than the previous one. The name **עֲמָנוּאֵל** has four *tenū'ōth*, and could only have been inserted in the *Yigdal* by dividing it, putting the first two syllables at the end of one hemistich and the other at the beginning of the next. This the poet very appropriately did in the longer poem (line 12). In the *Yigdal*, however, it would not only have been a violation of the artistic structure of the poem, but also quite out of place in view of the double meaning of the name. What has an ejaculation, 'God with us', to do in a register of philosophical and theological axioms? The poet had a choice of terms at his disposal,¹ but he deliberately chose one which not only expressed what he wished to express, but also delicately intimated his name. This was both ingenious and good taste! For myself this is so striking a proof of Immanuel's authorship that I consider an accidental slipping in of these two words, containing five out of the six letters of his name, out of the question. In an unvocalized manuscript in which the letters are generally written closely together the similarity is greater still.

We must also consider the relation of the *Yigdal* to the larger poem from which its lines are culled. Both have the same metre, the same rhyme, and many similar expressions and clauses, and several half-lines are identical. If, as Marx argues, literary property was thought of differently in those times, this holds good for ideas, doctrines, or systems expressed in prose language, but not for poetry. Thus Marx admits Immanuel's authorship of the

¹ e. g. **לֵאמֹתוֹ, לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, לְעַקֵּב**, &c.

adapted passages, but if in a poem of thirteen lines eleven abound in such 'adapted passages, this goes beyond the limits of literary honesty. I am therefore driven to the conclusion that Daniel did not wish his grandfather to pose as the *author* of the poem.

Finally, there is the following to be taken into account. On one side figures a person not known to have composed any liturgical or secular poems, except the one seemingly attributed to him by his grandson. The *Yigdal* betrays great ability. To compress each article of creed with its abstract notions into one line, whilst at the same time observing the rules of prosody and rhyme, is an achievement of amazing skill. No other of the numerous poems devoted to the same subject comes near it in impressiveness and concinnity. The proof is that for centuries they lay buried in the tomes of manuscripts. Had Daniel been a poetic genius he would surely have tried his hand at the production of other hymns. On the other side we have a bard renowned for his facility of turning out a galaxy of elegant verse. Immanuel had shocked pious devotees by the levity of his pen, yet Daniel is, after all, to be commended for having had the courage to introduce the *Yigdal* into the daily Prayer Book.

The two anti-Christian poems reproduced by Marx (p. 307) are also to be found at the end of a MS. of Joshua Segre's *אשם חלוי* (*Cod. Montef. H. 324, fol. 40, see my Catalogue, No. 453*) with numerous variations and omissions.

HARTWIG HIRSCHFELD.

Jews' College, London.